

The enclosed was sent
by me to Mr. Estlin, in
1853; & by my request
returned to me, when
used for the A.S. Advocate,
S.M. Jr.

Rev. S. May

J. A. Estlin

Child

Rev. S. J. M. will please
return it to S. M. Jr., when
done with.

MS. B.1.6 v.1, p.55

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Note. I purposed to supply the material you requested, for an Advocate notice of the Unitarians, in a more connected & better-arranged form. But I will not longer delay; perhaps in its present shape you can use it quite as well as in any other. — As I have had no time to make a copy of this, will you send it back to me, when you have made what use you wish of it?

P.S. I have taken much pains to have it correct.

American Unitarians.

[1844]

Whole No. Unitⁿ. Societies, in U.S. . . . 244. — Of these, 235 are in the Free States (205 in N. England States — 167 in Mass^{ts} alone.) leaving only 9 for Slaveholding States.

Whole No. Unitⁿ. Min^{rs}, in U.S. . . . 207. — Of these, 200 are in the Free States (181 in N. Eng^d. States, i.e. the States of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Mass^{ts}, Rhode Island, & Connecticut) leaving only 7 in Slaveholding States.

☞ above taken from Unitarian Cong^l. Register, for 1853.

No. of Church Members, no where given. Probably not exceeding 15,000.

Obviously, a relig. body, geographically so placed, can have comparatively small temptation to make concessions to Slavery, or palter with it in a double sense. Still more, from their professed religious belief, might we anticipate ^{from Unitarians} a steadfast & unbroken protest against so ~~totally~~ unjust, tyrannical, & cruel a system as that of American Slavery. In the words of the Author of the Commentary on the Gospels, one of their leading & favourite ministers, the distinguishing Unitarian doctrines are "The inviolable Unity of God" — "The fatherly character of the Almighty, reflected in His Son" — and "The Brotherhood of man with man everywhere." (Italics are mine.) Livermore, preface to Comm. Vol. 1. p xiii.

The ^{earlier} ~~early~~ history of the Unitarian body — or until within the last ~~five or six~~ ^{six or eight} years — for the most part bore out these natural expectations, and was an honourable history, as compared with that of most of the ecclesiastical bodies. This was admitted, several years since, by the New York Evangelist (an orthodox ^{journal} ~~work~~), which said that the Unitarians were in advance, in reform, of other denominations. One of the first — if not the very first — of the ~~New England~~ American Ministers to take Mr. Garrison by the hand, and identify himself with the Anti-Slavery Movement, was Rev. Samuel J. May, then of Brooklyn

MS. B. 1. 6. v. 1, p. 55

(State of Connecticut), now of Syracuse (State of New York,)
Mr. Wendell Phillips ^{recently} ~~said~~ (himself of orthodox views), ^{said} of Mr.
S. J. May that he was "one of the very first to pledge to the Slave his
life & efforts - a pledge which more than 20 years of devoted labours
have nobly redeemed." This was in the year 1829, when Mr.
Garrison first came to Boston, and before the Liberator was begun, which was 1830.
Soon after, Rev. Charles Follen, a German by birth and edu-
cation, but whose love of freedom, Civil and Religious, made him an
exile from his native land, & who had ~~sought~~ ^{taken} refuge in New England
and there given himself to the Christian Ministry, sought out Mr.
Garrison, and espoused the antislavery cause; - as unpopular an
act as he could have done. But he never flinched from it,
though it entailed upon him great inconveniences, disappoint-
ment, & loss. He was a most courageous & disinterested friend &
pillar of the Cause, from that time to the hour of his death - which
occurred in 1840, by that awful conflagration which destroyed the
Steamboat Lexington in Long Island Sound. He did not live to
see the ~~terrible~~ defection & cowardice of the Churches he had loved,
and the pulpits in which he had ministered.

In 1835, Rev. Dr. Channing brought his powerful mind
and pen to bear upon the question of Slavery. Dr. C. had a
great dread of organized, associated effort. He was a member
of only one or two societies, & preferred always to act by himself.
He therefore never co-operated with any society, or associated effort,
against Slavery*. But from that time, ^{until} ~~up to~~ his death, ^{Oct. 1842,} his
interest in this question became more & more absorbing. More
& more frequently, he wrote & published, letters, essays, sermons, &
upon it. The exceeding plain speaking of the Abolitionists, - their
telling the simple, naked truth, of a system, with respect to which an
almost unbroken silence had been ^{long} preserved, ~~at~~ ^{was} - rather offended and
for a time alienated Dr. Channing. But his was not a mind to be long
under such influences. He recognised the greatness, the nobleness, and the
urgent necessity, of the Antislavery Cause. It was late in the year 1835 that
he published his treatise on "Slavery" - 167 pages, 18mo. Dr. C. lived but ^{seven} ~~four~~
years longer. But in that time, though with feeble health, how much did
he accomplish! Every year - nay every day - his soul was moved, and to
its depths, in his contemplation of the terrible work Slavery was doing in
the land. During those 7 years, he wrote & published the Letter to James

* Near the end of his life he said - "I see that I have lived too much by myself. I
wish you more courage, cordiality, & real union with your race".

G. Birney, Letter to Hon. Henry Clay on the Annexation of Texas, Remarks on the Slavery Question in a Letter to J. Phillips Esq., Emancipation (reviewing the British W. India Emancipation, & deducing its lessons), the two Tracts on the "Creole" case (the vessel ~~the Creole~~ ~~the ship~~ ~~the vessel~~ having slaves on board, who rose upon the crew, took possession of the vessel, & carried her into the port of Nassau, N. Providence, one of the Bahamas), and the First of August Address at Lenox, Mass. — his last and ~~if possible~~ ~~perhaps~~ his most earnest word of pleading with this guilty Nation.

Rev. Henry Ware, who died in 1843, was a decided Anti-Slavery Man. He aided in the formation of an Antislavery Society in Cambridge, while a Professor in the College there. This gave so great offence to the friends of the College, that Mr. Ware ceased from any public connection with the Society, & indeed made but few public appeals thereafter for the cause. His health was very feeble, ^{and he could not continue;} but some poetical productions show that his heart never severed from his anti-slavery love. Had he been more outspoken & firm, it would have mightily encouraged the hearts of many of the younger ministers, who regarded him ~~as~~ as a father, and would have been of the greatest value to the struggling friends of the enterprise.

The labours of the venerable Dr. Noah Worcester, in this & every other cause which looked to the elevation & salvation of the Mankind, can never be forgotten.

In 1843, the subject of Slavery was brought before the American Unitⁿ. Assocⁿ, (as it had previously been ~~the~~ before less general meetings of the ^{the} body) by Rev. John Parkman, Jr.; but it was put aside. ^{Early} In 1844, ~~the subject was again brought~~ an address from British Unit^{ns}. was sent to America. It was an able & affectionate Appeal, and signed by 185 Ministers. A meeting of Unitⁿ. Ministers was held in Feb. 1844, ^(?) in Boston, to consider & reply to this address. — ~~But the~~ Annual Meeting of the A. U. A. ^{in May 1844} ~~was held~~ the subject of Slavery was again ~~brought~~ brought forward by Rev. Samuel May Jr., of Leicester, and ^{distinct} an effort made to induce the Assocⁿ. to say that Slavery was contrary to ~~the~~ Humanity, Republicanism, & Christianity. For this however they were not ready, & satisfied themselves with censuring the Unitarian Society at Savannah, Georgia, for refusing to allow Rev. Mr. Motte to preach to them, because they had heard that, in a sermon at the North (though of Southern birth himself) he had ~~defend~~ protested against the wrongs which the Colored people suffer, both North and South.

It was during these discussions, ~~in~~ many
These discussions were marked by ~~the~~ most vehement ~~and~~
bitter denunciations of the Abolitionists, on the part of several
prominent Unitarian Ministers. W. L. Garrison was declared to be
governed by "a hellish spirit". The Abolitionists were ~~the~~ said
to be aiming "to subvert Christianity, & extirpate it from the earth".
It was ~~during these meetings~~ ^{at a meeting of this Assocⁿ.} that Rev. Dr. Francis Parkman,
a wealthy ^{U.} minister of Boston, (& who, since the death of Dr.
Channing, ~~and~~ Ware, and Greenwood, had become a kind of
leader of the body) proclaimed in the hearing of several
bystanders that "No ~~letter or resolution~~ ^{letter or resolution} on the subject of Slavery shall
ever go forth from the Unitarian ~~body~~ Association, while
he was a member of it." ^{none} He ~~also~~ ^{even} openly, & personally, denounced
those who introduced the subject, as born to plague that Assocⁿ
and declared that to ~~send~~ return an escaped Slave into Slavery
again was ~~an~~ duty ~~as man and as partner~~ into which, as man
and as brethren, the North owed to the South. - He and other
prominent Unitⁿ. Ministers opposed Dr. Channing in his efforts
to arouse the North, & spoke of Dr. C.'s antislavery as a
weakness.

It was about this time that Rev. John G. Palfrey, formerly
Pastor of Brattle Square Church, ^{Boston,} afterwards Theological Professor at Cambridge
received, as a part of the inheritance of his father's estate (who had been a
slaveholder in Louisiana), a number of slaves. - He received them as a
portion of his share, at his own expense brought them to a Free State,
~~executed~~ deeds of manumission, & thus bore a noble ~~and~~ testi-
mony, at ^{much} ~~great~~ cost to himself, against Slavery.

In 1845, at a meeting of Unitarian Ministers in Boston, a
document entitled "A Protest Against American Slavery"
was adopted, & voted to be circulated for signatures. It received
the signatures of 173 ministers - of whom 153 were of New England. Only
one resident of a Slaveholding State signed it. - It was publicly stated at
the time that about 80 Unitⁿ. Ministers, (50 of whom had charge of parishes)
and among them the most influential ministers of the denomination, refused to
sign the Protest. Among the recusants, were Rev. Drs. Gannett, Dewey, ^{Yo}
Parkman, Lottrop, ^{G.} Putnam, (who signed & then withdrew his name), ^{J. N. Frothingham} Lamson,
S. Barnett, P. Peabody, Messrs. G. E. Ellis, Lunt, C. Lincoln, Bartol, &c. &c. Of
those who signed, but a very small proportion can, with propriety,
be said to have been true to the solemn pledge they therein gave, ~~that~~

Ms. B. 1. 6. v. 1, p. 55

viz. "We, on our part, do hereby pledge ourselves before God and our brethren, never to be weary of labouring in the cause of human rights and freedom till Slavery be abolished & every Slave made free."

Of the few Unitⁿ. Ministers, residing in Slaveholding States, Rev. Dr. Gimman of Charleston, S.C., & Rev. W. G. Eliot of St. Louis, Missouri, are known to have been Slaveholders. ^{Each held one slave. Mr. Eliot has ceased to hold that relation.} Both excused the act, on the plea of benevolence, - forgetting that, had they suddenly died in that relation, their slaves would have been (as they were by the laws of those States) portions of their property, & might have been sold for their debts; forgetting too, the countenance and shelter, afforded by their example, to every Slaveholder in the land! Surely if a Minister of the Gospel may hold Slaves, who may not? and can it be wrong for others to do, what they do? How such questions will be answered, in any community, is obvious.

- Another Southern U.ⁿ minister (also claimed by the Universalists as belonging to them), Rev. Theodore Clapp of New Orleans has been one of the most unblushing & offensive advocates of Slavery in the Country. In a sermon preached in New Orleans, April 15. 1838, he said, "The venerable patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, & others, were all Slaveholders. In all probability, each possessed a greater number of bondmen & bondwomen than any planter now living in Louisiana or Mississippi." Again, "The same God who gave Abraham Sunshine, air, rain, earth, flocks, herds, silver, & gold, blessed him with a donation of slaves." "Here we see God, dealing in Slaves; giving them to his own favourite child - a man of superlative worth - and as a reward for his eminent goodness." These extracts are not an exaggerated specimen of the whole discourse. - A few years since, it was remembered that Mr. Clapp had essentially modified his ideas, as above expressed. - This brought out an explanation, in the N. Orleans Picayune, to the effect that "Christian philanthropy does not require the immediate emancipation of slaves." "Whilst one lives in a Slave State, he is bound by Christianity to submit to its laws touching Slavery." "Christianity does not propose to release the obligations of slaves to their masters." Notwithstanding these views of Mr. Clapp, none of which have been retracted, or apologised for, - if any have been abandoned, do which there is no proof -

he was specially invited by a Committee of Boston Unitarians, to attend their Religious Anniversaries in Boston some three or four years since; and his letter in reply was read in ~~one~~ their largest meeting, where perhaps one thousand were present, including a very large number of ministers & prominent laymen, without any remonstrance or rebuke.

In 1846, the Irish Unitarian Christian Society sent a second letter, on the subject of Slavery, to their American brethren. It was ~~only~~ with much difficulty, and not until ~~perhaps~~ nearly or quite a year and a half had elapsed, that any reply to it ~~could be obtained~~ ~~was received~~, could be obtained, & sent to Ireland.

In short the American Unitarians, as a body, have ~~not~~ dealt with the question of Slavery in anything but an impartial, courageous, & Christian way. Continually, in their public meetings, the question has been staved off, and driven out, because of technical, formal, verbal difficulties, which were of no moment whatever, and need not have caused an instant's hesitation, while every consideration of a vital & substantial nature called for, and demanded, plain & earnest words, and decisive and manly deeds. So the body dragged along - yielding up more & more of their soul, and conscience, and independence, to the management and control of a few determined persons in the principal cities - Boston & New York.

Then came the Fugitive Slave Law - in 1850, that Law we need not stop to describe. "Whoever has read 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' - and who in Gt. Britain or in America has not?" - knows what the hunting of fugitive slaves is. - When ^{that Law was} first promulgated, there was, in the North, an almost universal outburst of indignation, a feeling of dreadful shame, a sense of a most bitter insult. The first impulse of

the Unitarians, as of all ^{of them,} was to denounce it. At their
Autumnal Convention in Springfield, they did so, - although
there was a strong opposition to any vote or action being had,
Probably the law would have passed unrebuked, had not a
venerable man, - the Rev. Dr. Willard of Deerfield - arose,
on the morning after the first discussion of the subject, and
protested against ~~such~~ that way of gliding over the subject,
Dr. Willard has long been blind; would to God that the moral
sight of many of his ^{ministerial} brethren were half as clear and pure as his.

In tremulous eloquence he called upon them to reconsider
their action; he appealed to their shame & their pity. His
words were followed by others, and that meeting adopted ~~some~~
resolutions condemnatory of the Fugitive Slave Law. [It may
seem strange to British readers, that ~~that~~ ^{it} should be mentioned as
anything unusual, or noticeable, that a relig. body should condemn a
law which forbids all men to feed the hungry, clothe the naked,
visit the oppressed, give shelter and rest to the weary, in Christ's
name, and for humanity's sake. But so it is in America,
When ^{action} a similar ^{to the above} thing was proposed at Utica, N.Y., at the General
Convention of one of the largest eccles. bodies in the U.S., - viz.,
that it should be declared that the Fugitive Slave Law ^{is} in
opposition to the Law of God, the proposition was received with
laughter, and was immediately thrown out by ~~an~~ a nearly
unanimous vote; no one, it is believed, voting for it but the Negroes.]

At the annual meeting of the A. U. Association, May 1851, the
Rev. David J. May, of Syracuse N.Y., introduced resolutions ~~of~~ that
"we consider the F. Slave Law a most fearful violation of the Law of God,
as taught by Jesus Christ & his Apostles" - & censuring the Northern
Statesmen, Fillmore, Webster, ^{exactly} Eliot, &c, and the Northern Unitⁿ
Ministers, Devey, Gannett, Sparks, who had helped to enact or who
had justified that Law. [Resⁿ. in Lib^r. of June 6, 1851.] The resⁿ.
were seconded by Rev. Th. Parker. A Boston lawyer, seconded
by a sub-urban minister, moved that ~~the~~ the paper be not received
the previous question was called for - and the resolutions
were cast out, 27 to 22. Subsequently the same

resolutions were discussed in a meeting of ministers - at which the following sentiments were expressed by different persons:

Rev. Dr. Hall, of Providence, said "he should not see that law, through the country, went to pieces."

Rev. Mr. Osgood, of New York, "admitted the iniquity of the F. S. Law."

Rev. Mr. Ellis, of Charleston said, "if our Northern land is to be the scouring-board ground of slavehunters, the sooner the Union was sundered, the better", [The sentiments of these two last-named are quoted, the rather as they have said nothing of the kind since, of which the public has heard.]

Rev. Dr. Gannett, of Boston, said, "the comfort of this people, and the perpetuity of the Union, depended on the support of the Fugitive Slave Law."

Dr. Gannett is known to have said that if a fugitive slave came to his door to beg relief and aid, he should feel it his duty to refuse it, & send him away.

Dr. Dewey's atrocious language cannot be forgotten - which, as repeated, in scores of places, in lectures and speeches, was, after most sickening cant of his love of liberty and hatred of slavery, to the effect that he would go himself into slavery, ~~may~~ would help to send his mother, his brother, or his son, into slavery, ^{rather} than the Union should be broken. - It is true,

Dr. Dewey has positively denied saying "mother", but admits using "brother" & "son". We will not question his word, but choose to think him forgetful; we cannot throw away the positive testimony of honorable and high-minded men, who have publicly & positively testified that they heard him use the word "mother" in the above connexion. "In the month of 2 witnesses, every word shall be established."

Among Unitarian ministers, who are true to the Anti-Slavery cause may be named, William H. Furness of Phil^a, Rev. Dr. Willard, Rev. Jos. Pierpont, Rev. S. J. May, Rev. Theodore Parker, Rev. Caleb Stetson, Rev. Saml. Johnson, John T. Sargent, Samuel May Jr, John Parkman Jr, Nathl. Hall, W. H. Channing, John Weiss, J. F. Clarke, C. C. Shafford, Robert F. Wallcut, P. W. Higginson, and others whom we may have overlooked. Everyone has had cause to suffer for his Anti-Slavery fidelity.